

Buddhist law, and not the text tradition. Consequently the astonishing fact pointed out again by Schopen remains that not much is found in the Theravāda Vinaya about duties in respect of *cetiyas*, in complete contradistinction to the Vinayas of other schools. Whatever the ultimate explanation of this evidence may be, there is certainly no loss of text involved, and the doubts and reservations expressed by Schopen himself against his own views, proffered only tentatively, prove to be fully justified.

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## A NOTE ON AMBAPĀLĪ'S WIT

The *Therigāthā* contains a justly famous poem attributed to Ambapālī, verses 252–70. The former courtesan describes the wrack of her beauty in old age; each of the nineteen verses in turn describes the decay of a physical feature, moving down from the hair of her head in the first verse to her feet in the eighteenth.

The last verse (270) reads:

*ediso ahu ayam samussayo jajjaro bahudukhānam ālayo  
so 'palepapatito jarāgharo saccavādivacanam anāññathā.*

It seems to have escaped the attention of commentators and translators that this contains an excellent pun. Her body, which used to have all the beauties described at the beginning of each of the previous verses, is now compared in its entirety to a house in ruinous condition, “with its plaster fallen off”, as Norman translates. He discusses the phrase and cites the commentary in his note on the verse.<sup>1</sup> There is some doubt about the text of the commentary itself, but it is clear both that the commentary saw two ways of construing the phrase and that it took the metaphor of plaster as referring to *abhisamkhāra*, which I understand to mean the store of good *kamma*: the commentator is saying that Ambapālī’s luck has run out. I may have misunderstood *abhisamkhāra*; but certainly the commentator has not seen the pun I am about to point out, and that is probably because he did not understand the *p/v* alternation. Norman in his note refers to that alternation and sees that *apalepa* is a phonetic variant for *avalepa*, but draws no conclusion from that fact.

Monier-Williams’ *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* gives for *avalepa* a meaning “pride, haughtiness” — such as a woman might have in her beauty. So *apalepa-patito* means “pride-fallen”. The primary meaning, I suggest, is that her beauty has fallen from its proud condition, but the

<sup>1</sup> K.R. Norman, *Elders' Verses II*, London 1971, p. 119.

compound leaves open the implication that it has also fallen *because of* pride; the ambiguity is richly poetic. This pun may also explain why in the metaphor the house is said to be *apalepa-patito* rather than *patitāpalepo*, as one might expect in a *bahubbihi*.

"Such was this body. A crumbling home of many sufferings, it is a decayed mansion shedding the pride of its plaster. Unfailing is the word of the Truthful."

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Richard Gombrich

## MAKING MOUNTAINS WITHOUT MOLEHILLS: THE CASE OF THE MISSING STŪPA

Those who share my admiration for the contribution that Professor Gregory Schopen has been making in recent years to the study of early Buddhist history will have shared also my excitement at seeing that he had contributed an article to a recent number of this journal. *The Stūpa cult and the extant Pāli Vinaya* (JPTS XIII, 83–100) tells an exciting tale of doctored texts, perhaps monastic censorship. But alas, it turns out to be much ado about nothing.

The article begins: "One of the more curious things about the Pāli Vinaya as we have it is that it contains no rules governing the behaviour of monks in regard to *stūpas*." One of the more curious things about the article (as we have it) is that it goes on to cite several passages in the *Vibhaṅga* section of the Pāli Vinaya which do refer to stupas, including a reference to their worship (p. 92). What Schopen means, it soon turns out, is that there are no references to the construction and cult of stupas in the other main part of the Pāli Vinaya, the *Khandhaka*. As Bareau pointed out,<sup>1</sup> all the parallel versions of this part of the *Vinaya* which are preserved in other languages do contain such details.

Schopen bases his exciting hypothesis on the claim that a twelfth-century Sinhala inscription, the *Mahā-Parākramabāhu katikāvata*, says that a monk's duties towards stupas are mentioned in the *Khandhaka* — but they are not. This is the molehill which he elevates to the mountain of systematic monastic censorship. But there is not even such a molehill: unfortunately his case rests on a simple mis-translation. The inscription describes daily monastic routine and says that each morning monks should perform two sets of duties: "both the duties towards stupa,

<sup>1</sup> André Bareau, "La construction et le culte des stūpa d'après les *Vinayapiṭaka*", *Bulletin de l'école française d'extrême orient*, L, 1962 (not 1960 as cited by Schopen), 229–74.